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MONTANA LETTER

August 14, 1972

ERTS COMES TO HILL COUNTY

Hill county is one of six counties in the U.S. selected to provide "ground truth" information necessary to verify data acquired and relayed by the orbiting Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS). Hill county was chosen because of the large acreages devoted to strip farming (alternate strips of crop and fallow). The area will offer long narrow linear fields and also medium to large block fields to test the capability of ERTS to determine field and strip sizes.

Selected for observation in Hill county is a 12-square mile area in the Grainbelt community lying northwest of Havre and east of Fresno Reservoir. The ERTS will pass over this area every 18 days so that crops can be viewed as they are growing and spectral changes can be observed. The first aerial pass was August 7.

The same day the satellite passes over Hill county, ASCS personnel will visit the area to view and report crop conditions on 38 selected fields. This "ground truth" will be furnished to NASA to help interpret and verify the data obtained by ERTS.

The ERTS orbital path is 565 miles above the earth. The satellite contains a multi-spectral scanner, a data collection system and three return-beam vidicon cameras. Each camera frame covers an area 100 miles square with objects only as large as a football field clearly identifiable. The vidicon cameras photograph with three different bands in the color spectrum - red, green and near infra-red - which will permit frames to be sandwiched together for easier interpretation.



One of the enjoyable parts of the recent National ASCS Conference was meeting Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz. We also had our pictures taken, as this shows, with Leo Kolstad on the left, Secretary Butz, me, and Roy Killenbeck.

Agricultural studies, such as identifying crops, is only one of the many uses for ERTS. Other areas of study

include forestry, geology, oceanography, hydrology and environmental ecology.

Counties other than Hill selected for the ground reporting and verification study are Hardin county, Iowa; Worth county, Georgia; Imperial and Butte counties, California; and Holt county, Nebraska.

Holt county was selected because of a large number of center pivot irrigation systems which present large tracts of a homogeneous nature that can train computers to recognize spectral signatures or plant responses of individual crop species. Hardin county was picked because it is a typical Corn Belt area offering a variety of oats, alfalfa, corn and soybeans. Imperial offers cotton, sorghum, sugarbeets, barley, alfalfa, and winter vegetables for study, while Butte county has fruit, nut and rice crops. A combination of cotton, peanut and tobacco crops was the main reason for the selection of Worth county. Hardin and Worth will offer additional tests to ERTS because of the small area of the fields and the limited contrast in crops which will make differentiations difficult.

To prepare for Hill county's part in the project, Bill Crea and Larry Schulze of NASA's Earth Observation Division, Houston; James R. McMullen, Northwest Region deputy director; and Dale Nerlin, State office compliance specialist, conferred with ASCS county personnel.

Leo Kolstad, State executive director; Iler Hellebust, Hill county director; Fred Allen, district director; and Nerlin attended a two-day special meeting in Salt Lake City for representatives of the six participating counties.

BRUCE JOINS RETIREES

Clarence Bruce, one of the earliest

employees of ASCS back in the days when it was called the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, has retired after 34 years of service. Clarence was



Clarence Bruce

born and raised in Fallon county. After periods of employment there in an abstractor's office, the Fallon County Extension Agent's office and the Fallon AAA office, he transferred in 1936 to the State AAA office in Bozeman.

He served in the U.S. Navy during WW II, then returned to the State office in 1945 as chief of the audit and statistical section. Two years later, he left ASC to become office manager for the Chipman Chemical Company in Portland.

In 1949, he returned to Montana and was re-employed by ASC as a fieldman covering southwestern Montana. In 1954, he became chief of the agricultural conservation program section and in 1963, chief of the administrative division. In this capacity he worked closely with ASC county committees and employees throughout the State on budgeting, management, personnel, facilities, and training. For his work he was recognized with a reward for consistently high quality performance and exemplary service.

Clarence and Mrs. Bruce (Lucille to us) plan to continue living in Bozeman and giving more attention to their horses, as well as other interests such as camping and fishing. Their house is on Sourdough Road south of Bozeman and we're certain they'll welcome any of you who happen to be in the neighborhood and have time to stop in and say "Hello".

FORMER CHAIRMAN DIES

Frank A. Cleland, chairman of the Montana ASC State committee from 1954 to 1958, died recently at Laguna Beach, California.

Cleland operated a dairy and diversified irrigated farm near Charlo during his years of service on the State committee. Prior to that, he had been manager of the American Crystal Sugar factory at Missoula. He was born in California, attended the University of California at Davis and served in WW II with the Second Marines.

Funeral services were in Laguna Hills, California.

MINORITY ADVISORS NAMED

We are one of 11 States chosen to participate in a pilot project to increase involvement of minority groups in farm programs. The program, which began in late June, establishes a farmer or rancher from a minority group as advisor to his ASC county committee.



These are three of the new minority group advisors serving on ASC county committees. Left to right are: William V. Parnell, Blaine County; Robert Yellowtail, Jr., Big Horn County; and Robert Lytle, Glacier County.

Minority advisors, all Indians, selected for the six counties participating in Montana are: Robert Yellowtail, Jr., Big Horn; William V. Parnell, Blaine; Robert Lytle, Glacier; James F. Helmer,

Roosevelt; Ervin Elliot, Rosebud; and James Doney, Valley.

The advisory committeemen will participate in all county committee meetings, including executive sessions, and take part in all deliberations. Advisory members will not have voting rights, since present legislation limits this to elected members.

The program hopes to give farmers and ranchers of minority groups greater exposure to ASCS personnel, programs and regulations and insure that minority producers' problems and view points are represented in decisions on new programs and practices.

The pilot program is scheduled to end December 31, 1973, but will probably be expanded if the results improve participation in programs and policy making by minority groups.

HEARING SET ON SUGAR SHARES

A public hearing on the need for establishing proportionate shares (acreage allotments) for next year's sugarbeet crop will be held August 17 in Denver. Anyone interested is invited to submit views, either orally or in writing.

The Sugar Act provides that the Secretary of Agriculture shall establish proportionate shares if he determines that the production of sugar from a crop will be greater than the quantity needed to enable the sugarbeet area to

meet its quota and provide a normal carry-over.

Restrictions on sugarbeet acreage have not been needed since 1966, although

shares were established for 1970 and then rescinded as developments made them unnecessary.

In addition to presenting views at the hearing, interested persons may send their comments in writing (original and two copies) to the Director, Sugar Division, ASCS, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250 postmarked not later than August 31, 1972.

PAYMENTS EXCEED \$79 MILLION

More than \$79 million had been paid to Montana participants in this year's wheat and feed grain set-aside programs by August 4. Counties were authorized to begin making payments July 1 and, despite some problems with the computer at New Orleans which processes all set-aside payment applications, most of the preliminary payments under both programs have been made.



Still to be paid are those people who have excess crop acreages still to be disposed of and those few cases where unusual circumstances or errors cause unusual delays.

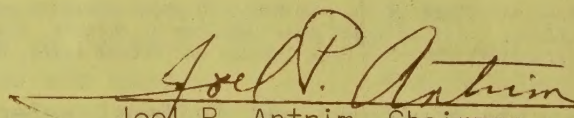
A total of 26,115 drafts were issued during the first five weeks of the payment period covering \$15.3 million in feed grain and \$63.9 million in wheat preliminary payments. These are Montana figures and give some idea of

the task nationally.

Wheat payments include approximately 75 percent of the total certificate payment expected to be earned (with the balance to be made in December) and payment for diverting acreage above the minimum amount required for participation. Feed grain payments include payment for both qualifying and additional set-aside. If additional payment is needed to bring feed grain returns to the guaranteed national average (\$1.35 per bushel on the production of half the farm corn base and \$1.10 per bushel on half of the barley base), it will be made after March 1, 1973.

SPREADING IT THIN...AND QUICK

THE SMALLEST LAMB CROP since record-keeping began in 1924 is being produced on Montana ranges this year. The estimate is 709,000 head, 6 percent below 1971. The largest crop was 2.7 million in 1934 . . . AFTER BREAKING THE \$3 barrier in June, the wheat parity price continued up to reach \$3.03 per bushel for the month ending July 15. The previous record high had been \$3.02 on June 15. Parity on wheat first exceeded the \$2 level in April 1946 . . . U.S. FARM EXPORTS for the year ended June 30 were \$2 billion larger than agricultural imports. This was the best spread in five years and helped hold our overall balance of trade deficit to \$5.1 billion--largest in history.


Joel P. Antrim, Chairman
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